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MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE SHIPMENTS DECLINE IN 1957

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Shipments of Christmas trees from Montana in 1957, which totaled more than 3.7 million trees, was 11 percent below the total shipments for 1956, but with the exception of the 1956 peak year, was still higher than any year since records were started in 1942. This is the eleventh year in which more than 3 million trees were shipped. Shipments have not fallen below the 3 million mark since 1952.

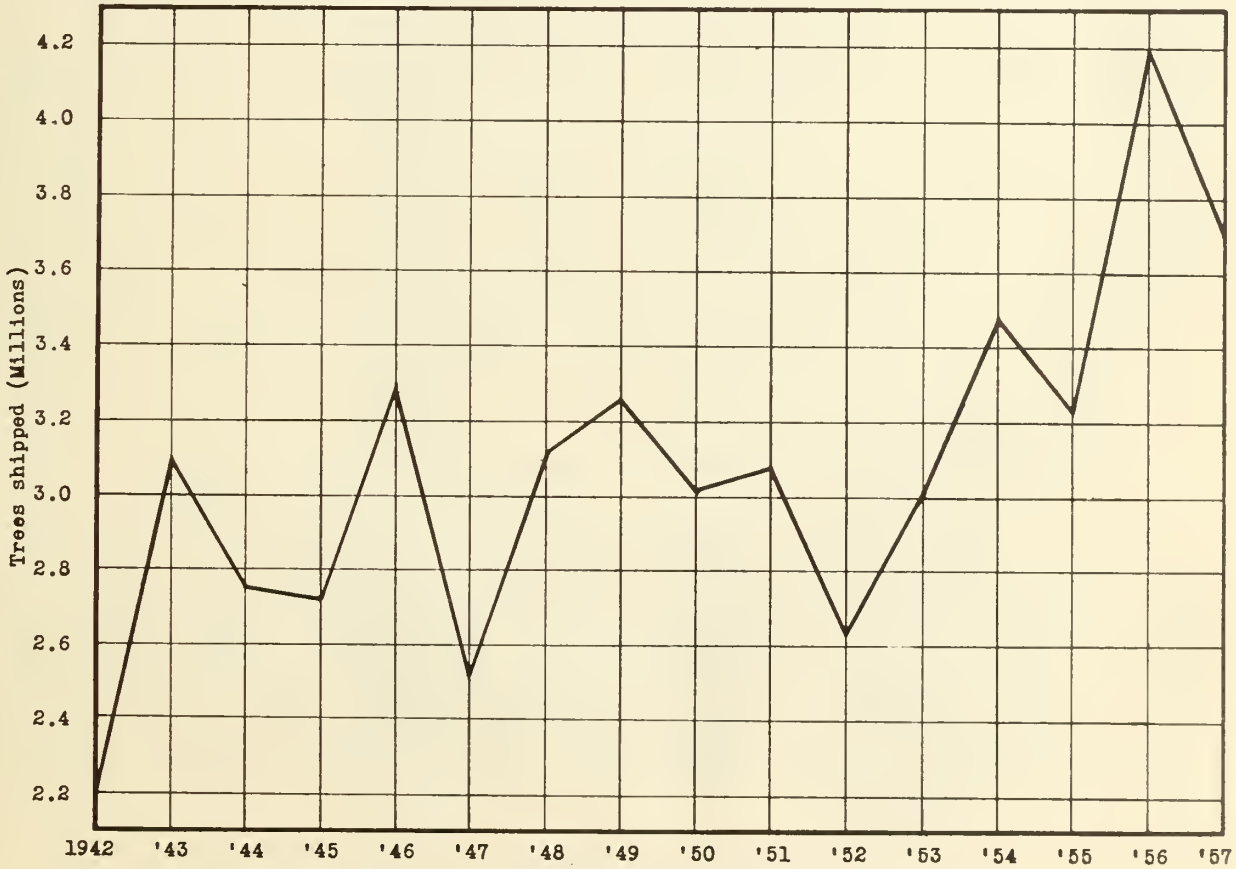

Figure 1.--Montana Christmas tree shipments, 1942 to 1957.

This report is not a survey of the total Christmas tree production of Montana but concerns truck and rail export shipments only. Very complete data on rail shipments were furnished by the railroads that operate in the State, and truck shipment estimates were supplied by the Montana State Forester, the University of Montana, the national forests, and the U. S. Customs Service. This report is estimated to account for 95 percent of all Montana's shipments; the remaining 5 percent are unreported truck shipments.

Decreases occurred in all the principal tree-shipping counties, but the most marked decrease occurred in Flathead County, which shipped 23 percent fewer trees than in 1956. Nevertheless, Flathead County maintained the lead it has held for 8 of the past 9 years by shipping 31 percent of Montana's total. Lincoln County followed closely with 30 percent of the State's total. Flathead, Lincoln, and Missoula Counties accounted for 78 percent of all shipments, only 1 percent less than the 79 percent they contributed in 1956. Powell County regained its place among the top eight counties, from which it had been displaced by Beaverhead County in 1956.

Table 1.--Comparison of Christmas tree shipments by counties, 1956 and 1957

County	1956	1957	Change 1956 to 1957
	Number of trees		Percent
Flathead	1,476,635	1,143,921	-23
Lincoln	1,164,763	1,126,614	-3
Missoula	645,136	642,799	-(1/)
Sanders	385,757	348,049	-10
Lake	348,274	289,212	-17
Powell	100	68,597	+685
Mineral	54,400	55,159	+1
Ravalli	47,869	35,668	-25
Other 2/	72,420	10,000	-86
Total	4,195,354	3,720,019	-11

1/ Less than 1 percent.
2/ Includes Gallatin, Silverbow, and Lewis and Clark Counties.

In many areas, the severe damage resulting from the spruce budworm epidemic can be blamed for the decline in shipments. Despite its name, this insect attacks Douglas-fir, which is the favored species for Christmas trees, much more severely than it does spruce. The larvae of the insect destroy the appearance of the tree for Christmas tree use by feeding inside the buds and current foliage on leaders and lateral branches. It is also a special threat to the industry because spraying to kill it must ordinarily wait until the insect has reached a certain developmental stage, by which time the damage to infested trees has been done.

Table 2.--Total shipments of Christmas trees from Montana by counties, 1957

County	Rail shipments[1/]	Truck shipments[2/]	Total	Percent of total
	- - - - - - - Number of trees- - - - - - -			
Flathead	916,750	227,171	1,143,921	31
Lincoln	907,250	219,364	1,126,614	30
Missoula	304,000	338,799	642,799	17
Sanders	199,500	148,549	348,049	9
Lake	280,250	8,962	289,212	8
Powell	0	68,597	68,597	2
Mineral	19,000	36,159	55,159	2
Ravalli	4,750	30,918	35,668	1
Other[3/]	0	10,000	10,000	(4/)
Total	2,631,500	1,088,519	3,720,019	100
Percent of total	71	29	100	

1/ From reports by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific; Northern Pacific; Union Pacific; and Great Northern Railway companies.

2/ Truck shipment data were furnished by the State forester, Montana State University, the U. S. Customs Service, and the national forests.

3/ Includes Gallatin, Silverbow, and Lewis and Clark counties.

4/ Less than 1 percent.

Percentagewise, rail shipments declined to the lowest point (71 percent) on record, while truck shipments passed the million mark (29 percent of total shipments) for the first time.

Table 3.--Comparison of railroad and truck Christmas tree shipments from Montana, 1942-1957

Year	Rail shipments		Truck shipments	
	Trees	Percent	Trees	Percent
1942	2,138,800	97	64,950	3
1943	2,930,750	94	171,730	6
1944	2,636,250	96	119,500	4
1945	2,555,500	94	168,000	6
1946	2,867,000	87	432,400	13
1947	2,210,000	88	305,640	12
1948	2,731,250	88	391,636	12
1949	2,816,750	87	440,206	13
1950	2,693,250	89	324,530	11
1951	2,783,500	90	301,040	10
1952	2,375,000	90	269,600	10
1953	2,389,250	79	631,031	21
1954	2,759,750	79	722,618	21
1955	2,854,750	88	380,144	12
1956	3,348,750	80	846,604	20
1957	2,631,500	71	1,088,519	29

Montana's rail exports of Christmas trees reached 29 market states in 1957. In addition, 12 carloads were shipped for export to Hawaii and 2 carloads for export to Cuba. The 10 leading market states were practically the same ones in 1957 as in 1956; the most noticeable change in rank was the displacement of Texas by California as the leader.

Table 4.--Rail shipments to leading markets for Montana Christmas trees, 1957 and 1956

1957			1956		
State	Number of trees	Percent of total	State	Number of trees	Percent of total
California	403,750	15	Texas	489,250	15
Texas	346,750	13	California	470,250	14
Missouri	294,500	11	Missouri	408,500	12
Oklahoma	261,250	10	Iowa	337,250	10
Iowa	247,000	10	Oklahoma	308,750	9
Illinois	185,250	7	Kansas	275,500	8
Kansas	171,000	7	Nebraska	237,500	7
Nebraska	161,500	6	Illinois	199,500	6
Louisiana	109,250	4	Colorado	104,500	3
Arizona	61,750	2	Louisiana	99,750	3
Others	389,500	15	Others	418,000	13
Total	2,631,500	100	Total	3,348,750	100

Imports of trees from Canada fell to the lowest number since 1950; thus 1957 was the next to lowest year on record for imports.

Table 5.--Christmas trees imported from Canada to Montana, 1946-1957

Year	Total number of trees imported	Percent of total shipped
1946	107,570	3.3
1947	89,944	3.6
1948	67,664	2.2
1949	54,050	1.7
1950	39,288	1.3
1951	72,036	2.3
1952	99,918	3.8
1953	99,055	3.3
1954	123,076	3.5
1955	125,603	3.9
1956	137,015	3.3
1957	46,809	1.3